



UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN SPECIAL VEHICLE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The cancellation of the Thaba 'Nchu 450, the penultimate round of the Donaldson Cross Country Championship, has left some unfinished business in the Special Vehicle category at the Atlas Copco 450 on the West Rand on November 28 and 29.

While the son and father combination of Quintin and Kallie Sullwald (Elegant Fuel BAT Venom) have wrapped up the overall and Class A championships, there is a delicately poised three-way battle for who finishes where in the minor placings. The Class P championship is also up for grabs with two crews in contention.

In winning the overall and Class A championships the Sullwalds wrote themselves into the record books. The pair previously won the South African championship with father Kallie doing the driving and son Quintin the navigating – but this time around the roles were reversed.

With a 36 point advantage in the overall standings and a 30 point advantage in Class A, the Sullwalds did the business when they needed to. The crews behind them all suffered from inconsistency, none more so than last year's champions, Evan Hutchison and Danie Stassen (Motorite BAT Viper), who suffered greatly via three non finishes.

The upshot is that behind the Sullwalds only six points separate the next three crews in both the overall and Class A championships. In the overall stakes Gerhard and Hardus du Plessis (Jimco) lead Hutchison/Stassen by one point with Laurence du Plessis/Gielie le Roux (Zarco) a further five points in arrears.

In the Class A chase Laurence du Plessis and le Roux lead Hutchison/Stassen and Gerhard/Hardus du Plessis, who are tied together, by six points. It is still mathematically possible for the likes of Wichard Sullwald, co-driver turned driver during the course of the season and KwaZulu-Natal pair Arthur Barnes and Anthony Usher (BAT) to sneak in ahead of the du Plessis siblings and the Hutchison/Stassen combination.

For that to happen, however, the Atlas Copco 450 would have to produce some strange results. Barnes and Usher have also missed the last two events.

The Class P title issue is a straight race between reigning champions John Thomson and Maurice Zermatten (Zarco), and KwaZulu-Natal crew James Watson and John Thomson in a BAT. The advantage lies with the reigning champions who are 15 points clear of Watson and Thomson.

Both teams have had consistent seasons with the high point for Watson and Thompson wins on the two heats that made up the Toyota 1000 Desert Race in Botswana. The champions, however, have scored three wins and have finished on the podium five times.

Behind the frontrunners veteran Nic Goslar and Andrew Massey (SA Clinics Zarco) and Keith Makenete/Moalosi Borotho (CRC Zarco) are out of the championship running, but are separated by a single point. That will make for an interesting little cameo.

Race headquarters, the start/finish and designated service park for the Atlas Copco 450 will again be located at the Kloof Country Club in Glenharvie. Public access to these areas and designated spectator points along the route is free of charge.

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